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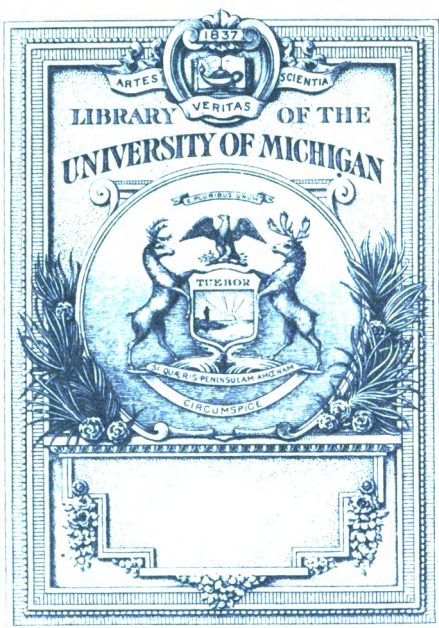
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ROBERT BROWNING'S
POETICAL WORKS

DRAMATIC LYRICS

LURIA

410.19



BY

ROBERT BROWNING

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1889

44

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DRAMATIC LYRICS.

VL

B

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

*CAVALIER TUNES.*¹

I. MARCHING ALONG.

I.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

¹ Such Poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces"; being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.—*R. B.*

II.

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you 're —

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

III.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song ?*

IV.

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !
Hold by the right, you double your might ;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHORUS.—*March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

I.

King Charles, and who 'll do him right now ?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since ?
Who raised me the house that sank once ?
Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
Who found me in wine you drank once ?

CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who 'll do him right now ?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !*

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him ?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who 'll do him right now ?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now ?
Give a rouse : here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles !*

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

CHORUS.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you 'd say ;
Many 's the friend there, will listen and pray
" God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

CHORUS.—"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :
Who laughs, " Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHORUS.—"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay !
" I 've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?

CHORUS.—"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :
 How all our copper had gone for his service !
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their
 graves !
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 —He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again !
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own ;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

***“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD
NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”***

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
“ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
 undrew ;
“ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
 place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'T was moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, "Stay spur !
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in her,
"We 'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick
 wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
 knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight !"

VIII.

"How they 'll greet us !"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or
good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
Ghent.

*THROUGH THE METIDJA TO
ABD-EL-KADR.*

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride ?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride ?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied ?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride !

V.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)

All that 's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I 'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS.

I.

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask ;
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady ;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,

Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order ;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the
bolder :

And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting !

Here 's to Nelson's memory !
'T is the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme !
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much :
Here 's one our Captain gives, and so
VI.

C

J,

Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
To Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder :
" For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
" Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
" Up against the mizen-rigging ! "

GARDEN FANCIES.

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I.

HERE 's the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since :
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box :
 And here she paused in her gracious talk
 To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.

c 2

Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by !
She loves you noble roses, I know ;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name :
What a name ! Was it love or praise ?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake ?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase ;
But do not detain me now ; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

V.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever !
Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not :
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me ?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall !
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all !

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I !
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbut and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
Added up the mortal amount ;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder 's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the Middle Age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he 'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate :
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo :

So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,
Cantate ! quoth I, as I got a rake ;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow :
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks !
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover ?
—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet ?

VIII.

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling !
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-eft, *sufficit* !
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf !
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.

I.

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence !
Water your damned flower-pots, do !
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you !
What ? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames !

II.

At the meal we sit together :
Salve tibi ! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year :
Not a plenteous cork-crop : scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt :
What's the Latin name for "parsley" ?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout ?

III.

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV.

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

V.

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.

I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate ;
While he drains his at one gulp.

VI.

Oh, those melons? If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII.

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type !
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe :
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in 't ?

IX.

Or, there 's Satan !—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he 'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We 're so proud of ! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
'St, there 's Vespers ! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo ! Gr-r-r—you swine !

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

II.

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do : they believe my tears
 flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—I am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

IV

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should
drop dead!

VII.

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII.

What a drop ! She 's not little, no minion like me !
That 's why she ensnared him : this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no !”
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would
fall
Shrivelled ; she fell not ; yet this does it all !

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain ;
Let death be felt and the proof remain :
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face !

XI.

Is it done ? Take my mask off ! Nay, be not morose ;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close :
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee !
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will !
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's !

THE CONFESSIONAL

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there ! through my door
And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world !

II.

You think Priests just and holy men !
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt !
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint : one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said : and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha ?" quoth the father ; "much I blame
"The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?
"Despair not—strenuously retrieve !
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine
"To lawful love, almost divine ;

VI.

“ For he is young, and led astray,
“ This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
“ To change the laws of church and state ;
“ So, thine shall be an angel’s fate,
“ Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
“ Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

“ For, when he lies upon thy breast,
“ Thou mayst demand and be possessed
“ Of all his plans, and next day steal
“ To me, and all those plans reveal,
“ That I and every priest, to purge
“ His soul, may fast and use the scourge.”

VIII.

That father’s beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright ;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell ;
And I lay listening in such pride !
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;
“ And now make haste,” I said, “ to pray
“ The one spot from his soul away ;
“ To-night he comes, but not the same
“ Will look ! ” At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty ; something drew
My steps into the street ; I knew
It led me to the market-place :
Where, lo, on high, the father's face !

•

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block . . . God sink the rest !
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !
No heaven with them, no hell !—and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

CRISTINA.

I.

SHE should never have looked at me
 If she meant I should not love her !
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
 I suppose . . . she may discover
 All her soul to, if she pleases,
 And yet leave much as she found them :
 But I 'm not so, and she knew it
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?
 But I can't tell (there 's my weakness)
 What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,
 About " need to strew the bleakness
 " Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
 " That the sea feels "—no " strange yearning
 " That such souls have, most to lavish
 " Where there 's chance of least returning."

III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 't is resting merely,

And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it ;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together ?

VII.

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever :
Never fear but there's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture !

VIII.

Such am I : the secret 's mine now !
She has lost me, I have gained her ;
Her soul 's mine : and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended :
And then, come next life quickly !
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

I.

ALL's over, then : does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes ?
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves !

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day ;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns grey.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?
May I take your hand in mine ?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign :

IV.

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever!—

V.

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
 Have struggled through its binding osier rods ;
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date !

LOVE.

So, the year's done with !
(Love me for ever !)
 All March begun with,
 April's endeavour ;
 May-wreaths that bound me
 June needs must sever ;
 Now snows fall round me,
 Quenching June's fever—
(Love me for ever !)

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

THE grey sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING.

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim :
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG.

I

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;
 To praise, you search the wide world over :
 Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her ?
 Above this tress, and this, I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

LET 's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep :
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep !

II.

What so wild as words are ?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough !

III.

See the creature stalking
While we speak !
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek !

IV.

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree—

V.

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm !
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX.

That shall be to-morrow
Not to night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight :

X.

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me !)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
 She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
 Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
 Little has yet been changed, I think :
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass,
 Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died !
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;
 It was not her time to love ; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV.

No, indeed ! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love :
I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few :
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?

Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
My heart seemed full as it could hold?
There was place and to spare for the frank young
smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young
gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
 Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
 Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was !
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
 And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
 Long ago ;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame ;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,

By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

v.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,
dumb
Till I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men !
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !
Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I.

OH, what a dawn of day !
How the March sun feels like May !
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love 's away !
I 'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II.

Runnels, which rillels swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago !
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so !

IV.

Laughs with so little cause !
We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws ;
 Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws !

V.

What's in the "Times"?—a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold ;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
That's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sunflowers blow
In a solid glow,
And—to break now and then the screen—
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII.

Try, will our table turn ?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger-tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn !

VIII.

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck :
'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space !
Or, if no help, we 'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging-cap and vest !
 'T is a huge fur cloak—
 Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast :
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man !
 Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep :
'T was a time when the heart could show
 All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro ?

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—
'T was a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
Me, your own, your You,—
Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past—
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true
And the beauteous and the right,—
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threatens the white !

XVI.

What of a hasty word ?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick ?
See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred—
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care ?
'T is the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear !

XVIII.

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows :
 We shall have the word
 In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows :
 Heaps of the guelder-rose !
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
 At the warning slash
 Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
 Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

XX.

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
 We can stand apart,
 Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt !

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry

“ But one freezes here! and why?

“ When a heart, as chill,

“ At my own would thrill

“ Back to life, and its fires out-fly?

“ Heart, shall we live or die?

“ The rest, . . . settle by-and-by!”

XXII.

So, she 'd efface the score,

And forgive me as before.

It is twelve o'clock :

I shall hear her knock

In the worst of a storm's uproar,

I shall pull her through the door,

I shall have her for evermore !

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON
OF QUALITY.)

I.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
square ;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
there !

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at
least !
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than
a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's
turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses !
Why ?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something
to take the eye !

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who
hurries by ;

Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the
sun gets high ;

And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
properly.

V.

What of a villa ? Though winter be over in March by
rights,

'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well
off the heights :

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen
steam and wheeze,

And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-
trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at
once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red
bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick
and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to
spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-
bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not
abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist
in a sort of sash.

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you
linger,

Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn
and mingle,

Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is
shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the
resinous firs on the hill.

Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the
fever and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-
bells begin :

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles
in :

You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By-and-by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets
blood, draws teeth ;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play,
piping hot !

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves
were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new
law of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
So-and-so

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and
Cicero,

"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts
of Saint Paul has reached,

"Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached."

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady
borne smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
stuck in her heart !

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife ;
No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure
in life.

x.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at
double the rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil
pays passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not
the city !

Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still—ah, the pity,
the pity !

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with
cowls and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the
yellow candles ;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross
with handles

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better
prevention of scandals :

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in
life !

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

I.

OH Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find !
I can hardly misconceive you ; it would prove me deaf
and blind ;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy
mind !

II.

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all the
good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants
were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the
sea with rings ?

III.

Ay, because the sea 's the street there ; and 't is arched
by . . . what you call

. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept
the carnival :

I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

IV. ♣

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was
warm in May ?

Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-
day,

When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do
you say ?

v.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so
red,—

On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on
its bed,

O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might
base his head ?

VI.

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off
and afford

—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on
his sword,

While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavi-
chord ?

VII.

What ? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished,
sigh on sigh,
Told them something ? Those suspensions, those solu-
tions—" Must we die ?"
Those commiserating sevenths—" Life might last ! we
can but try !"

VIII.

"Were you happy ?"—" Yes."—" And are you still as
happy ?"—" Yes. And you ?"
—" Then, more kisses !"—" Did *I* stop them, when a
million seemed so few ?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be an-
swered to !

IX.

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you,
I dare say !
"Brave Galuppi ! that was music ! good alike at grave
and gay !
"I can always leave off talking when I hear a master
play !"

X.

Then they left you for their pleasure : till in due time,
one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds
as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never
see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand
nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close
reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro' every
nerve.

XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house
was burned :
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what
Venice earned.
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be
discerned.

XIII.

- "Yours for instance: you know physics, something of
geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their
degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it
cannot be!

XIV.

- "As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom
and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly
were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had
to stop?

XV.

- "Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the
heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become
of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and
grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

I.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
 The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say :
 As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
 Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
 No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
 In the valley beneath where, white and wide
 And washed by the morning water-gold,
 Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II.

River and bridge and street and square
 Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
 Through the live translucent bath of air,
 As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
 And of all I saw and of all I praised,
 The most to praise and the best to see
 Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised :
 But why did it more than startle me?

III.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
 Could you play me false who loved you so.
Some slights if a certain heart endures
 Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know
I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
 To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
 When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead
 Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved leaf which they never shed)
 'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
 By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
 Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
 For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
 But with empty cells of the human hive ;

—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
 Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI.

Wherever a frêscò peels and drops,
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains :
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
 —A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
 The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !
 They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
 The Michaels and Rafæls, you hum and buzz
 Round the works of, you of the little wit !
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
 Now that they see God face to face,
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
 'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows :
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX.

And here where your praise might yield returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

X.

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to ! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends

For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
 'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy.

XI.

“If you knew their work you would deal your dole.”
 May I take upon me to instruct you?
 When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
 Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—
 The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
 Which the actual generations garble,
 Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
 And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
 As you might have been, as you cannot be;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
 And grew content in your poor degree
 With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
 And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
 And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
 And your little date, by their forms that stay.

VI.

G

XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You 're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You 're grieved—still Niobe 's the grander!
You live—there 's the Racers' frieze to follow:
You die—there 's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.
—When I say "you" 't is the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's clear plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they?

Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?

In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature ;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

XVI.

To-day's brief passion limits their range ;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change :
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us ; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished :
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII.

'T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better ! What 's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven :
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto !
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O !"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrification?

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
"And paint man man, whatever the issue!
"Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
"New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:
"To bring the invisible full into play!
"Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

XX.

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 't is no idle quiddit.

The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honour them now ! (ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folk leave college.

XXI.

There 's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins :
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series ;
Only the scale 's to be changed, that 's all.

XXII.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's
serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done ;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God :
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy ;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue ?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So, now to my special grievance—heigh ho !

XXIV.

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er :
—No getting again what the church has grasped !
The works on the wall must take their chance ;
“Works never conceded to England's thick clime !”
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—

Why don't they bethink them of who has merited ?

Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, how a captive might be out-ferreted ?
Why is it they never remember me ?

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;
Nor the wronged Lippino ; and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's :
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye ?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman ?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling bari
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX.

They pass ; for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglysh ;
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino !

XXX.

No matter for these ! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,-
Oh, never ! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet

Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last ! and to whom ?—to whom ?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe !
Nay, I shall have it yet ! *Detur amanti !*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that 's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye ;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy ?

XXXII.

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing ;
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

This time we 'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot-
No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV.

How we shall prologize, how we shall perorate,
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo*:

And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence Italy.

XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
 While "God and the People" plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

I.

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,—
The happier they !
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the bean-flowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June !

II.

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.

Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her—Calais)—

Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

OH, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England—now !

II.

And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
 That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
 Lest you should think he never could recapture
 The first fine careless rapture !

And though the fields look rough with hoary dew
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west
died away ;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz
Bay ;

Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gibraltar
grand and gray ;

“ Here and here did England help me : how can I help
England ? ”—say,

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,

While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL.

I.

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere
thou speak,

"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and
did kiss his cheek.

And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,

"Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his
tent

"Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth
yet,

"Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be
wet.

"For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three
days,

"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor
of praise,

"To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their
strife,

"And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back
upon life.

II.

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved ! God's child with
his dew

"On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living
and blue

"Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no
wild heat

"Were now raging to torture the desert !"

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my
feet,

And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was
unlooped ;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped ;

Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered
and gone,

That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,

And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried

A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion; and slow into sight

Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.

Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul,

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side;

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in
: : his pangs

Recitation of Saul as he is killed
his delusion of SAUL made him, ¹⁰¹

And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark,
blind and dumb.

Describing the harp
Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine *plants*
round its chords *to Saul*

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those
sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one
after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
have fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's
bed;

And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows
star

Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will
each leave his mate

To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets
elate

Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what
has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—

There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
half mouse!

God made all the creatures and gave them our love and
our fear, *if Francis.*

To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-
song, when hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand

And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And
then, the last song

When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear,
bear him along

"With his few faults shut up like dead *flowers.* flowerets! Are
balm-seeds not here

"To console us? The land has none left such as he on
the bier. (*a grave that a corpse is put upon*

"Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!—*to know him in the graveyard*—And
then, the glad chaunt.

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she
whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the
great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an
arch

Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our friends?—

Then, the chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.

But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

David stops singing!
VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and *Saul stops, but only!*
listened apart; *His body stay!*

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and *still*
sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a
start,

All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at
heart.

So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung
there erect.

And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it un-
checked,

As I sang, *David starts*

singing again.

IX.

“Oh, our ^{great thing} manhood's prime vigour! No

spirit feels waste,

“Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.

“Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,

“The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock

“Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,

“And the ^{sweetness} sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

“And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,

“And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,

“And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell

“That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

“How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ

“All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!

- "Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose
 sword thou didst guard } *love of father*
 "When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious
 reward?
 "Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up
 as men sung } *Mother*
 "The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint
 tongue } *how much the mother has given in life*
 "Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more
 attest,
 "'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all
 was for best?'
 "Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not
 much, but the rest.
 "And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working
 whence grew } *brothers*
 "Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
 strained true :
 "And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of
 wonder and hope, } *friendship boyhood its hope*
 "Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the
 eye's scope,—
 "Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is ⁱⁿ *an instant*
 thine;
 "And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head
 combine !

"On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage
(like the throe

*He's Saul's
lived!*
"That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the
gold go)

"High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
crowning them,—all

"Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King
Saul!"

How strong!

x.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp
and voice,

Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
rejoice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I
say,

The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through
its array,

Beautiful
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I,
and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
who hung propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by
his name.

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right
to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held
 (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
 broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves
 grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to
 his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your
 mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages un-
 told—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow
 and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail,
 there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the
 nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green
 on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer. One long
 shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was
 stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and
 aware.

What was gone, what remained? All to traverse, 'twixt
hope and despair ;
Death was past, life not come : so he waited. Awhile
his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith
to remand
To their place what new objects should enter : 't was
Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt
any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow
decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and
entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely : so, arm
folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next
should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song
filled to the verge

His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond,
on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup
they put by?
He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me
praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round
me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in
sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that
might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be
passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and
the rocks,

"Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the
show

"Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall
know!

"Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the
courage that gains,

"And the prudence that keeps what men strive for."
And now these old trains

Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once
more the string

Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII.

"Yea, my King,"

I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
that spring

"From the mere mortal life held in common by man
and by brute:

"In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
it bears fruit.

"Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its
stem trembled first

"Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then
safely outburst

"The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when
these too, in turn

- "Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect : yet
more was to learn, —
- "E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
dates shall we slight,
- "When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care
for the plight
- "Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them?
Not so ! stem and branch
- "Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
palm-wine shall staunch
- "Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee
such wine.
- "Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the spirit be
thine !
- "By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy
- "More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of
a boy.
- "Crush that life, and behold its wine running ! Each
deed thou hast done
- "Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ; until e'en as
the sun
- "Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
though tempests efface,
- "Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
everywhere trace

- “The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of
thy will,
- “Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall
thrill
- “Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they
too give forth
- “A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South
and the North
- “With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse
in the past!
- “But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at
last:
- “As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her
height
- “So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever
take flight.
- “No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look
forth o’er the years!
- “Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin
with the seer’s!
- “Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb
—bid arise
- “A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till,
built to the skies,
- “Let it mark where the great First King slumbers:
whose fame would ye know?

"Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record
shall go

"In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul,
so he did ;

"With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid,—

"For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there ! Which
fault to amend,

"In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
they shall spend

"(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise,
and record

"With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the states-
man's great word

"Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The
river's a-wave

"With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
prophet-winds rave :

"So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
their part

"In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
that thou art !"

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst
grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and
my sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was
my word,—

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
endeavour

And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed
hopeless as ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to
save,

Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's
throne from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my
heart

Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night
I took part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my
sheep,

And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!

For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron up-
heaves

The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
Kidron retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV.

I say then,—my song

Saul

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more
strong

Made a proffer of good to console him — he slowly
resumed

His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-hand
replumed

His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the
swathes

Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his counte-
nance bathes,

He wipes off with the robe ; and he girds now his loins
as of yore,

And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set
before.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ; and still,
though much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God
did choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite
lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the
pile

Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop,
to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched
on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient
there ;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I
was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-
roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to
know
If the best I could do had brought solace : he spoke not,
but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with
care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow :
thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my
head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a
flower.

Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—

And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but where was the sign ?

I yearned—" Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,

" I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this ;

" I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,

" As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense !"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more ! outbroke—

(?)

XVII.

" I have gone the whole round of creation : I saw and I spoke :

" I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain

" And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again

" His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I saw :

- "I report, as a man may of God's work—all 's love, yet
all 's law.
- "Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each
faculty tasked
- "To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-
drop was asked.
- "Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom
laid bare.
- "Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite Care!
- "Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
- "I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no
less,
- "In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen
God
- "In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.
- "And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
- "(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises
it too)
- "The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-
complete,
- "As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His
feet.
- "Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity
known,

“ I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my
own.

“ There ’s a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-
wink,

“ I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)

“ Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst

“ E’en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I
durst !

“ But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o’ertake

“ God’s own speed in the one way of love : I abstain for
love’s sake.

“—What, my soul ? see thus far and no farther ? when
doors great and small,

“ Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the
hundredth appal ?

“ In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest
of all ?

“ Do I find love so full in my nature, God’s ultimate gift,

“ That I doubt his own love can compete with it ?
Here, the parts shift ?

“ Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what
Began ?

“ Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
man,

“ And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet
alone can ?

- "Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will,
much less power,
"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous
dower
"Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such
a soul,
"Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering
the whole?
"And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears
attest)
"These good things being given, to go on, and give one
more, the best?
"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at
the height
"This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night?
"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mis-
take,
"Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake
"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
himself set
"Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet
"To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?
—or endure!

- "The man taught enough, by life's dream, of the rest to
make sure ;
"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
bliss,
"And the next world's reward and repose, by the
struggles in this.

XVIII.

- "I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who
receive :
"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.
"All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt
to my prayer
"As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.
"From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Sabaoth :
"I will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not
loth
"To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I
dare
"Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops
my despair?
"This ;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but
what man Would do!

- "See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
- "Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
- "To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
- "I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now !
- "Would I suffer for him that I love ? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou !
- "So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
- "And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
- "One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no breath,
- "Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death !
- "As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
- "Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved !
- "He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
- "T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for ! my flesh, that I seek

"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it
shall be

"A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
"Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand
like this hand

"Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See
the Christ stand!"

XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the
night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to
right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the
aware:

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly
there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell
loosed with her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled
and shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I
fainted not,

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,
suppressed

All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy
 behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to
 rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from
 earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender
 birth ;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills ;
In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the sudden
 wind-thrills ;
In the startled wild beasts that bore oft, each with eye
 sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the birds
 stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid
 with awe :
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by
 the flowers ;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved
 the vine-bowers :
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent
 and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it
 is so !"

MY STAR.

ALL that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue ;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue !
Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower, hangs
furled :
They must solace themselves with the Saturn
above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world ?
Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I
love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn-evenings come :
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too !

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose !

III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek :

"Now then, or never, out we slip
"To cut from the hazels by the creek
"A mainmast for our ship!"

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

V.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees :
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI.

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand :
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead !

VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge !
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain ?

VIII.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings !

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below ?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow !

X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it

By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XL.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers !
For the drop of the woodland fruit 's begun,
These early November hours,

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-neededled mat of moss,

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

K

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet ;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike !

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,

Leave the grange where the woodman stores his
nuts,

Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times ;
The place is silent and aware ;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor ?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem !

XXIII.

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;

And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV.

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead ?

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
In each now : on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands ?

XXVIII.

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine !

XXIX.

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss ?

XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall !

XXXI.

What did I say ?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair

Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'T is better ; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square :
Nothing to see ! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date ;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait !

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite !
The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
The West is tender, hardly bright :
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite !

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well :

The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this !

XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her :
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test !
“ Hold the last fast ! ” runs the rhyme.

XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend :
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all !
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall !

XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize !

XLV.

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,

And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third ;
One near one is too far.

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast ;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life : we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII.

The forests had done it ; there they stood ;
We caught for a moment the powers at play :
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us !
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does !

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan ;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
There took my station and degree ;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet !

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit

Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how !

LIII.

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain
too ;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes : which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
 As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
 Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
 The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
 Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—'t is willed so ! Might I save,
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
 It is not to be granted. But the soul
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole ;
 Vainly the flesh fades ; soul makes all things new.

IV.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
 Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
 Who never is dishonoured in the spark
 He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
 Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
 While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
 Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
 Alike, this body given to show it by !
 Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
 What plaudits from the next world after this,
 Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky !

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
 Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
 Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
 For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
 With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see! We meet and part; 't is brief;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
 The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
 And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,

Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,

“Therefore she is immortally my bride ;

“Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X.

“So, what if in the dusk of life that ’s left,

“I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,

“Look from my path when, mimicking the same,

“The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone ?

“—Where was it till the sunset ? where anon

“It will be at the sunrise ! What ’s to blame ?”

XI.

Is it so helpful to thee ? Canst thou take

The mimic up, nor, for the ~~true thing's~~ sake,

Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?

Is the remainder of the way so long,

Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong ?

Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream !

VI.

L

XII.

—Ah, but the fresher faces ! “ Is it true,”
Thou ’lt ask, “ some eyes are beautiful and new ?
“ Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such
wealth ?
“ And if a man would press his lips to lips
“ Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
“ The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth ?

XIII.

“ It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
“ More than if such a picture I prefer
“ Passing a day with, to a room’s bare side :
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian’s Venus lies at rest,
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide ? ”

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud.
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man’s-truth I was bold to bid God see !

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou canst
 Away to the new faces—disentranced,
 (Say it and think it) obdurate no more :
 Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
 Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
 Image and superscription once they bore !

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
 It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
 Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
 Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee !

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?
 Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?
 Why need the other women know so much,
 And talk together, "Such the look and such
 "The smile he used to love with, then as now !"

XVIII.

Might I die last and show thee ! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know !

XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word, too much to learn at first ;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst !

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two :
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride ?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask :
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI.

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed

There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal : and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast !

V.

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere !
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers !

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

X.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,

Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn !
Where is the thread now? Off again !
The old trick ! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on !

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I.

THAT was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small :
Life was dead and so was light.

II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm ;
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music ; that was I.

III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof :

In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V.

So wore night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—"When life gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes,

VII.

“One friend in that path shall be,
 To secure my step from wrong ;
“One to count night day for me,
 ‘ Patient through the watches long,
“Serving most with none to see.”

VIII.

Never say—as something bodes—
 “ So, the worst has yet a worse !
“When life halts ’neath double loads,
 “ Better the taskmaster’s curse
“Than such music on the roads !

IX.

“ When no moon succeeds the sun,
 “ Nor can pierce the midnight’s tent
“ Any star, the smallest one,
 “ While some drops, where lightning rent,
“Show the final storm begun—

X.

“ When the fire-fly hides its spot,
 “ When the garden-voices fail

"In the darkness thick and hot,—
"Shall another voice avail,
"That shape be where these are not?

XI.

'Has some plague a longer lease,
"Proffering its help uncouth?
"Can't one even die in peace?
"As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
"Is that face the last one sees?"

XII.

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III.

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'T is well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

I.

JUNE was not over
 Though past the full,
 And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
 (But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
 And time discloses)
 Turned him and said with a man's true air,
 Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were,—
 “ If I tire of your June, will she greatly care ? ”

II.

Well, dear, in-doors with you !
 True ! serene deadness
 Tries a man's temper.
 What 's in the blossom
 June wears on her bosom ?

Can it clear scores with you ?

Sweetness and redness.

Eadem semper !

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly !

If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly

By plucking the roses,—my June will do rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,

If June be refulgent

With flowers in completeness,

All petals, no prickles,

Delicious as trickles

Of wine poured at mass-time,—

And choose One indulgent

To redness and sweetness :

Or if, with experience of man and of spider,

June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,

And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I.

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
 And the blue eye
 Dear and dewy,
 And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
 And enfold you,
 Ay, and hold you,
 And so keep you what they make you, Sweet !

III.

You like us for a glance, you know—
 For a word's sake
 Or a sword's sake,
 All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet !

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet !

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there :
Be its beauty
Its sole duty !
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,
 Who shall wonder
 That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,
 Scout mere liking?
 Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X.

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
 Love with liking?
 Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
 If love grew there
 'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye.

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
—A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose :

XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

XVIII.

Then how grace a rose? I know a way !
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away !

RESPECTABILITY.

I.

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
"Have recognized your plighted troth,
"Am sponsor for you: live in peace!"—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

II.

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

III.

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word!—the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me?

Never—

Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,

So long as the world contains us both,

Me the loving and you the loth,

While the one eludes, must the other pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear :

It seems too much like a fate, indeed !

Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,

And, baffled, get up and begin again,—

So the chace takes up one's life, that 's all.

While, look but once from your farthest bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope goes to ground

Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed !

IN THREE DAYS.

I

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn !
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine !

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days !
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her ! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

III.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled !
As early Art embrowns the gold.

IV.

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
"That change the world might change as well
"Your fortune ; and if joy delays,
"Be happy that no worse befell !"
What small fear, if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
"May throw no shadow on your ways ;
"But years must teem with change untried,
"With chance not easily defied,
"With an end somewhere undescried."

No fear !—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I

NEVER any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive :
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange ! that very way
Love begun :
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

IV.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied !
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet :
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V.

“Speak, I love thee best !”
He exclaimed :
“Let thy love my own foretell !”
I confessed :

"Clasp my heart on thine

"Now unblamed,

"Since upon thy soul as well

"Hangeth mine!"

VI.

Was it wrong to own,

Being truth?

Why should all the giving prove

His alone?

I had wealth and ease,

Beauty, youth:

Since my lover gave me love,

I gave these.

VII.

That was all I meant,

—To be just,

And the passion I had raised,

To content.

Since he chose to change

Gold for dust,

If I gave him what he praised

Was it strange?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt !
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
" Mine before.

IX.

"What, she felt the while,
" Must I think?
"Love's so different with us men!"
He should smile:
"Dying for my sake—
"White and pink!
"Can't we touch these bubbles then
"But they break?"

X.

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!

Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart :
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time !
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed !
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die !—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once ! But no—the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn :
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind !— Alas ! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE.

I.

LET them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far.
 God must judge the couple : leave them as they are
 *—Whichever one 's the guiltless, to his glory,
 And whichever one the guilt 's with, to my story !

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
 Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
 Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
 Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment ?

III.

Who 's the culprit of them ? How must he conceive
 God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
 “T is but decent to profess oneself beneath her :
 “Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either !

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes ;
Then go live his life out ! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes !
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI.

What 's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII.

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can !
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven !

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it ! Trusts he God or no ?
Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so !
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses !

IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him ? While God's champion
lives,
Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him ;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall ?
No ?—Let go, then ! Both the fighters to their places !
While I count three, step you back as many paces !

AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst !

How he lies in his rights of a man !
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance ; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace ?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold :
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne !

I stand here now, he lies in his place :
Cover the face !

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared ?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
 (Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
 —My angel with me too : and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
 At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
 And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA.

I.

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II.

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

III.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV.

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather !
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY.

I.

STAND still, true poet that you are !

I know you ; let me try and draw you.
Some night you 'll fail us : when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star !

II.

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend ?

III.

His clenched hand shall uncloset at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty :

My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising ;
"Others give best at first, but thou
"Forever set'st our table praising,
"Keep'st the good wine till now !"

V.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder :
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VI.

O

VII.

And each bystander of them all
 Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
 —To get which, pricked a king's ambition ;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII.

Yet there 's the dye, in that rough mesh,
 The sea has only just o'erwhispered !
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
 As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX.

Enough to furnish Solomon
 Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,

What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI.

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last !
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats :
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup :
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!

Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!

Answer the question I've put you so oft:

What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we're alone in the loft,—

II.

I, the poor organist here,

Hugues, the composer of note,

Dead though, and done with, this many a year:

Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III.

See, the church empties apace:

Fast they extinguish the lights.

Hallo there, sacristan ! Five minutes' grace !
 Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
 Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds,
 Hushing its hundreds at once,
 Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds !
 —O you may challenge them, not a response
 Get the church-saints on their rounds !

V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
 —March, with the moon to admire,
 Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
 Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
 Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
 Order things back to their place,
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
 Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
 Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII.

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve !
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
 Here 's what should strike, could one handle it
 cunningly :
Help the axe, give it a helve !

III.

Page after page as I played,
 Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak?
 You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
 Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak !

X.

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!
 "Still, couldst thou take my intent,

“ Know what procured me our Company’s votes—
“ A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
“ Parted the sheep from the goats ! ”

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch !
Quick, ere my candle ’s a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
I believe in you, but that ’s not enough :
Give my conviction a clinch !

XII.

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be :
Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help ;
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry ’s open, the kennel ’s a-yelp,
Argument ’s hot to the close.

XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid ;
Two must discept,—has distinguished ;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did ;
Four protests ; Five makes a dart at the thing
wished :
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV.

One says his say with a difference ;
More of expounding, explaining !
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance ;
Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining ,
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive ;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant ;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive ;
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant :
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars ;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue

Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota.

On we drift : where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota ;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm
trying . . .

There ! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying !

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim—"But where's music, the dickens?
"Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
"—Blackened to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous :
Prove me such censure unfounded !
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
Hopes 't was for something, his organ-pipes sounded.
Tiring three boys at the bellows ?

XXII.

Is it your moral of Life ?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife ?

XXIII.

Over our heads truth and nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland ;

Nothings grow something which quietly closes

Heaven's earnest eye : not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

Ah but traditions, inventions,

(Say we and make up a visage)

So many men with such various intentions,

Down the past ages, must know more than this age !
Leave we the web its dimensions !

XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,

Proved a mere mountain in labour?

Better submit ; try again ; what's the clef?

'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger :

Learning it once, who would lose it ?

Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,

Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII.

Hugues ! I advise *með pœnð*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena !
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX.

While in the roof, if I 'm right there,
 . . . Lo you, the wick in the socket !
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there !
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs ?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket ?

L U R I A ;

A TRAGEDY

I DEDICATE
THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY
TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET;
"WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:"
IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST
WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,
TO SHAKESPEARE,
MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN
A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,
TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

LONDON : 1846.

PERSONS.

LURIA, *a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.*

HUSAIN, *a Moor, his friend.*

PUCCIO, *the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA'S chief officer.*

BRACCIO, *Commissary of the Republic of Florence.*

JACOPO (LAPO), *his secretary.*

TIBURZIO, *Commander of the Pisans.*

DOMIZIA, *a noble Florentine lady.*

SCENE.—*LURIA'S Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

TIME, 14—.

L U R I A.

1846.

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary* ; PUCCIO *standing by*.

Braccio [*to Puccio*]. Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puccio.

Not I ;

Luria, the captain.

Braccio [*to the Secretary*]. " In an hour, the battle."

[*To Puccio*.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,

And see if very much of your report

Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.

Does this instruct the Signory aright

How army stands with army?

Puccio [*taking the paper*]. All seems here :

—That Luria, seizing with our city's force

The several points of vantage, hill and plain,

Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,

VI.

P

And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Braccio.

So sure?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too!

Puccio. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Braccio [*to the Secretary*]. "The Signory hold Pisa
in their hand."

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir:
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence!

Puccio [*returning the paper*]. All seems here;
Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 't is my last report!
Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you:
Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
No youngster am I longer, to my cost;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
Had never met in any man before,

I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
But now, this last report and I have done :
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
'T were not amiss if some one old i' the trade
Subscribed with, " True, for once rash counsel 's best.
" This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
" This boy to whose untried sagacity,
" Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
" The charge to save her,—justifies her choice ;
" In no point has this stranger failed his friends.
" Now praise ! " I say this, and it is not here.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. Write, " Puccio, superseded
in the charge,

" By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
" And no reward our Signory can give
" Their champion but he 'll back it cheerfully."

Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers !

[PUCCIO goes.]

*Braccio [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the
paper into shreds].*

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit contempt
This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
Spit properly at what men term their skill !—)
Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.

With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
Lucca still off the stage, too,—all 's assured :
Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

Secretary. Patron,—

Braccio. Ay, Lapo?

Secretary. If you trip, I fall ;

'T is in self-interest I speak—

Braccio. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay !

When did I say pure love 's impossible?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,

Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Where all your old acquaintances may see :

You 'd die for me, I should not be surprised.

Now then !

Secretary. Sir, look about and love yourself !

Step after step, the Signory and you

Tread gay till this tremendous point 's to pass ;

Which pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,—

Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,

Or too delicious may not prove the pride

Of this long secret trial you dared plan,

Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, such slaves are they?
If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria. . . .

Braccio.

Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past?

Secretary. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
At watch and ward? Where's danger on your part,
With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world?
If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all?

Braccio. Ah, you have thought that?

Secretary.

Here I sit, your scribe,

And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;
This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,
Husain ; they talk—that's all feigned easily ;
He speaks (I would not listen if I could),

Reads, orders, counsels :—but he rests sometimes,—
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
On the lynx-skins yonder ; hold his bared black arms
Into the sun from the tent-opening ; laugh
When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
(That man believes in Florence, as the saint
Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Braccio.

How strange !

You too have thought that !

Secretary

Do but you think too,

And all is saved ! I only have to write,

“ The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last,

“ Bury it ”—so I write the Signory—

“ Bury this trial in your breast for ever,

“ Blot it from things or done or dreamed about !

“ So Luria shall receive his meed to-day

“ With no suspicion what reverse was near,—

“ As if no meteoric finger hushed

“ The doom-word just on the destroyer’s lip,

“ Motioned him off, and let life’s sun fall straight.”

Braccio [*looks to the wall of the tent*]. Did he draw
that?

Secretary.

With charcoal, when the watch

Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia

Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;

That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Braccio. He loves that woman.

Secretary.

She is sent the spy

Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :

Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,

Is surely safe. What shall I write?

Braccio.

I see—

A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !

Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive ;

Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.

What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,

And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,

Yet render up the charge when peace return,

Have ever proved too much for Florentines,

Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—

If in the struggle when the soldier's sword

Should sink its point before the statist's pen,

And the calm head replace the violent hand,

Virtue on virtue still have fallen away

Before ambition with unvarying fate,

Till Florence' self at last in bitterness

Be forced to own such falls the natural end,

And, sparing further to expose her sons

To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,

Declare, "The foreigner, one not my child,
"Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
"The glory, then descend into the shame ;
"So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
"And punishment the easier task for me :"
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No past with us, no future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.
The charges here, they may be true or false :
—What is set down? Errors and oversights,
A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted

By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
She who remembering her whole House's fall,
That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria (poor device
As plain) the instrument of her revenge
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
Weigh with me less than least—as nothing weigh.
Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go :
On what I know must be, yet, while I live,
Shall never be, because I live and know.
Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies :
But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up.
Till the good come—'t was intellect that ruled,
Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field
The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,

Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear
(Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
When all was done they frightened nobody)
Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
With our own warrant and allowance. No !
The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice ! There, my Lapo !
A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body :
Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come !

[LURIA, *who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved
at the close of the last phrase, now advances.*

Luria. And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Braccio. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?

I said it needs must be a busy moment
For one like you : that you were now i' the thick
Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Luria. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
What you were saying !

Braccio. Oh—my day's despatch !

I censure you to Florence : will you see?

Luria. See your despatch, your last, for the first time?
Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
He would be forced to set about another,

In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circumstance.
So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time !
Do not send this !

Braccio. And wherefore?

Luria. These Lucchese

Are not arrived—they never will arrive !
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure :
And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
To look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody !
And I must break my battle up, send forth,
Surround on this side, hold in check on that.
Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home,
—Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Braccio. Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
As a most happy fortune ; both at once
Were formidable : singly faced, each falls.

Luria. So, no great battle for my Florentines !
No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
For all of them, the simple as the wise,

Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be success,
Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain :
They want results : as if it were their fault !
And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
Will not be able now to simply say
“Your servant has performed his task—enough !
“You ordered, he has executed : good !
“Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
“Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,
“Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo’s shade !”
No, you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese !

Domizia. Well, you will triumph for the past enough,
Whatever be the present chance ; no service
Falls to the ground with Florence : she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Luria. Ah Braccio, you know Florence ! Will she, think
you,
Receive one . . . what means “fittingly receive” ?
—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :
And yet Domizia promises so much !

Braccio. Kind women still give men a woman’s prize.
I know not o’er which gate most boughs will arch,

Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best captain's place.

Luria. That, my reward? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!
And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—
Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee.

That was my calling, there was my true place!

I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye! They give me you:
But do you cross me, set me half to work?
I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once!
Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Braccio. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon:
Then, no arrival,—

Luria. Ah, noon comes too fast!
I wonder, do you guess why I delay
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible? Peace follows it!
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art

You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.
'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew ;
The walls are peopled by the painter's brush ;
The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.
The present noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal past to rule once more ;
You speak its speech and read its records plain,
Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend :
But Luria—where will then be Luria's place ?

Domizia. Highest in honour, for that past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Luria. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets,
Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—
Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again ?
For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness : still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
Not ever more ! Well, well, to-day is ours !

Domizia [to BRACCIO]. Should he not have been one
of us ?

Luria.

Oh, no !

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart !
The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength ;
Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile :
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies.
Well, 't is not sure the quiet lasts for ever !
Your placid heads still find rough hands new work ;
Some minute's chance—there comes the need of
mine :

And, all resolved on, I too hear at last
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio !
You hold my strength ; 't were best dispose of it :
What you created, see that you find food for—
I shall be dangerous else !

Braccio.

How dangerous, sir?

Luria. There are so many ways, Domizia warns me,
And one with half the power that I possess,
—Grows very formidable. Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Domizia.

While we talk,

Morn wears ; we keep you from your proper place,
The field.

Luria. Nay, to the field I move no more ;
My part is done, 'and Puccio's may begin :
I cannot trench upon his province longer
With any face.—You think yourselves so safe?
Why, see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
One could . . .

Domizia. A trumpet !

Luria. My Lucchese at last !
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands ! Your leave !

[*Springs out.*

Domizia. How plainly is true greatness charactered
By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself !
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Braccio. Yes : and how worthy note, that these same
great ones
In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course !

The statist finds it natural to lead
 The mob who might as easily lead him—
 The captain marshals troops born skilled in war—
 Statist and captain verily believe !
 While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking
 now,

That I shall in this very letter write
 What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo !

[DOMIZIA goes.]

This last worst all-affected childish fit
 Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
 Convinces me ; the past was no child's play :
 It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
 All's mere dissimulation—to remove
 The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
 The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written?
 Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
 And speak your fullest on the other side.

Secretary. I noticed he was busily repairing
 My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
 And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
 As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe.
 I judge his childishness the mere relapse
 To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
 And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
 Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

VI.

Q

Braccio [*after a pause*]. The sword! At best, the
soldier, as he says,
In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men! To Florence with each letter!

ACT II.

NOON.

Domizia. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce
thy heart

Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm ;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead : yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside
A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thy noblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,

Q 2

It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth :
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath ;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio’s actions worthy such reward ?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its colour whether false or no !
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
Cry, “ Florence was all falseness, so, false here ! ”
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God’s name
The city wedded to the wickedness.

None stood by them as I by Luria stand.
So, when the stranger cheated of his due
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died !
He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp
Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old.

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Domizia. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope?
'T is Lucca?

Luria. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely !
Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Domizia. Whom I withdraw before ; tho' if I lingered
You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
The overtaking night brings such reward !
And where will then be room for me? Yet, praised,
Remember who was first to promise praise,
And envy those who also can perform ! [Goes.

Luria. This trumpet from the Pisans?—

Husain. In the camp ;
A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good ;
A man I seem as I had seen before :
Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Luria. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay.

Husain. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !
Thou heardst what the grave woman said but now :
To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear ;
But stop not therefore : hear it, and go on !

Luria. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
They round me in the ears with, all day long ?
All that, I never take for earnest, friend !
Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors !
But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
That, we shall get ?

Husain. It is too cold an air.
Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist :
Where is he now ? So, I trust none of them.

Luria. Truly ?

Husain. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
('Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.
They use thee.

Luria. And I feel it, Husain ! yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature ; where its sole use seems
To fight with and keep off an adverse force,
As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws :

Inside, they know not what to do with me.
Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since am prepared to learn the worst.

Husain. What is the worst?

Luria. I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not speak—
Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, "The work rewards!
"I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
"So may it prove!—meanwhile 't is best I go,
"Go carry safe my memories of you all
"To other scenes of action, newer lands."—
Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
They would not easily have tired of me.
You think this hard to say?

Husain. Say or not say,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go!
This hating people, that hate each the other,
And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm;
While any creature of a better blood,
They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
Withers away beside their eyes and breath.

See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most ! But thou, the friend of all,
. . . Come out of them !

Luria. The Pisan trumpet now !

Husain. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend ! [*Goes.*

Luria. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes
Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
When change is in the elements at work,
Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
But here,—he takes the distant chariot wheel
For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Luria. Quick, sir, your message ! I but wait your
message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture
For truce ? I would not, for your General's sake,
You spoke of truce : a time to fight is come,
And, whatso'er the fight's event, he keeps
His honest soldier's-name to beat me with,
Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

Tiburzio. I am Tiburzio.

Luria. You? 'Tis—yes . . . Tiburzio!

You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
From Puccio, when I threw in succours there !
Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost !
You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away ;
While I drove down my battle from the heights,
I saw with my own eyes !

Tiburzio. And you are Luria
Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
In error of the battle-signal's sense,
Back safely to me at the critical time—
One of a hundred deeds. I know you. Therefore
To none but you could I . . .

Luria. No truce, Tiburzio !

Tiburzio. Luria, you know the peril imminent
On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa : if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 't is too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it,
That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
How dangerous we grow in this extreme,

How truly formidable by despair.
Still, probabilities should have their weight :
The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
You win this battle. Wherefore say I this?
To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Luria. 'Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tiburzio. Even so.

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Luria. Me, detach?

Tiburzio. Time urges. You will ruin presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time
Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home :
And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
The entire chain out, from these its scattered links
Your trial occupies the Signory;
They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
When men at home inquire into the acts

Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines! You, saving them,
Seek but the sure destruction saviours find.

Luria. Tiburzio!

Tiburzio. All the wonder is of course.

Sec. I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Luria. Florence!

Tiburzio. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service
Her own affair; reward—there's no reward!
But you are bound by quite another tie.
Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa; 't is as fair a city
You war against as that you fight for—famed

As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts :
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale,—
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
And all begins again. Break seal and read !
At least let Pisa offer for you now !
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Luria. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
As I for Florence . . . say my chance were yours !
You read this letter, and you find . . . no, no !
Too mad !

Tiburzio. I read the letter, find they purpose
When I have crushed their foe, to crush me : well ?

Luria. You, being their captain, what is it you do ?

Tiburzio. Why, as it is, all cities are alike ;

As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punishment.
Another tenure of obedience, mine !
You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Luria. And act on what I read? What act were fit?
If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
—If that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !
You may be very sage, yet—all the world
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone !
What would the world be worth? Whose love be sure?
The world remains : you are deceived !

Tiburzio.

Your hand !

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,
The better : I am left to speak ! For me,
This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect ;
And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in your breast.

Luria. Tiburzio—I would see these people once

And test them ere I answer finally!
At your arrival let the trumpet sound :
If mine return not then the wonted cry
It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tiburzio.

Well !

[*Goes.*

Luria. My heart will have it he speaks true ! My blood
Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given the salt
Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
Oh life, the long mutation—is it so?
Is it with life as with the body's change?
—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,
Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
But silently the first gift dies away,
And though the new stays, never both at once.
Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
As if to punish the ingratitude
With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
And learned to look with European eyes.

Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Puccio's mouth,
Domizia's eyes reject the searcher : yes !
For on their calm sagacity I lean,
Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
Yes, that is better—that is best of all !
Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go.
Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
Betrays its step into the pathless drift—
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,
The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
Yes : I trust Florence : Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Braccio. Noon 's at an end: no Lucca? You must
fight.

Luria. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
I am no Florentine?

Domizia. It is yourself
Who still are forcing us, importunately,
To bear in mind what else we should forget

Luria. For loss !—for what I lose in being none !
No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
But would remind you of the stranger's loss
In natural friends and advocates at home,
Hereditary loves, even rivalships
With precedent for honour and reward.
Still, there 's a gain, too ! If you take it so,
The stranger's lot has special gain as well.
Do you forget there was my own far East
I might have given away myself to, once,
As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
Stood there like a descended deity?
There, worship waits us : what is it waits here?

[*Shows the letter.*]

See ! Chance has put into my hand the means
Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
With payment palpably before me? See !
Here lies my whole reward ! Best learn it now
Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Braccio. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
For swordsman's-pay alone,—break seal and read !
In that case, you will find your full desert.

Luria. Give me my one last happy moment, friends !
You need me now, and all the graciousness
This letter can contain will hardly balance

The after-feeling that you need no more.
This moment . . . oh, the East has use with you !
Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
With the past praise, in a dark corner yet !
How say you? 'T is not so with Florentines,
Captains of yours : for them, the ended war
Is but a first step to the peace begun :
He who did well in war, just earns the right
To begin doing well in peace, you know :
And certain my precursors,—would not such
Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,
Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps ?
For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
Treachery even. Say that one of you
Surmised this letter carried what might turn
To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice :
What would he do ?

Domizia [*hastily*]. Thank God and take revenge !
Hurl her own force against the city straight !
And, even at the moment when the foe
Sounded defiance . . .

[*TIBURZIO's trumpet sounds in the distance.*]

Luria.

Ah, you Florentines !

So would you do ? Wisely for you, no doubt.
My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench

VI.

R

The obligation you relieve me from,
Still deeper ! [*To Puccio.*] Sound our answer, I should
say,
And thus :—[*tearing the paper.*]—The battle ! That
solves every doubt.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

PUCCIO, *as making a report to* JACOPO.

Puccio. And here, your captain must report the rest ;
For, as I say, the main engagement over
And Luria's special part in it performed,
How could a subaltern like me expect
Leisure or leave to occupy the field
And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting ?
I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
That Luria would detach me and prevent
The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
But no, more honourable proved my post !
I had the august captive to escort
Safe to our camp ; some other could pursue,
Fight, and be famous ; gentler chance was mine—
Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed !
He's in the tent there.

Jacopo. Is the substance down ?
I write—"The vanguard beaten and both wings
"In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner"—
And now,—“That they fell back and formed again
"On Lucca's coming.” Why then, after all,
’T is half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puccio. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jacopo. And Luria's fault was—?

Puccio. Oh, for fault—not much !
He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
—There's commonly more prudence ; now, he seemed
To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.
By over-concentrating strength at first
Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped :
That's reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jacopo. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio ?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Braccio. The report anon !
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.
[PUCCIO goes.
There's nothing done but I would do again ;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing,

And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jacopo. I was for waiting.

Braccio.

Yes : so was not I.

He could not choose but tear that letter—true !

Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks :—

You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.

So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say !

Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Luria [*to PUCCIO*]. Say, at his pleasure I will
see Tiburzio !

All 's at his pleasure.

Domizia [*to LURIA*]. Were I not forewarned
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you how you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
But words offend.

Luria.

Nay, you may praise me now.

I want instruction every hour, I find,

On points where once I saw least need of it ;

And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,

Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now.

After a battle half one's strength is gone ;

The glorious passion in us once appeased,

Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.

All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger: you, no doubt, may know
Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
And peradventure I grow nearer you,
For I, too, want to know and be assured.
When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend seeks fresh sustainments; praise is one,
And here stand you—you, lady, praise me well.
But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise.
To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
Your quick sense looks: you crown and call aright
The soul o' the purpose, ere 't is shaped as act,
Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
But when the act comes, stands for what 't is worth,
—Here 's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he 's my judge!
Was all well, Puccio?

Puccio. All was . . . must be well:
If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
—No, there 's no doubt, we must—all was well done.

Luria. In truth? Still you are of the trade, my
Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.
There 's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
For the all-unestimated sum of pains
That go to a success the world can see:

They praise then, but the best they never know
—While you know! So, if envy mix with it,
Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!
—For nothing's like it; nothing else records
Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be!
And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best
Is still to come. There's one looks on apart
Whom all refers to, failure or success;
What's done might be our best, our utmost work,
And yet inadequate to serve his need.
Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—
Well done for us, seems it well done for him?
His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
Answers the end? Should he have chosen higher?
Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought?

Braccio. This battle, with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.

Luria. Why then, all is very well!
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all.
And yet . . . 't is like . . . this instant while I speak
Is like the turning-moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me!

Well then, one always dreams of friends at home ;
And always comes, I say, the turning-point
When something changes in the friendly eyes
That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .
And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
And all is mockery and a maddening show.
You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .
Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well !
Come now—this battle saves you, all 's at end,
Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,
In Florence? Come! I feel it in my blood,
My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
You are betraying me. What is it you do?
Have it your way, and think my use is over—
Think you are saved and may throw off the mask—
Have it my way, and think more work remains
Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not !
Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
(But tell me—tell what I refused to know
At noon, lest heart should fail me! Well? That letter?
My fate is sealed at Florence! What is it?

Braccio. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.

It is no novelty for innocence
To be suspected, but a privilege :
The after certain compensation comes.
Charges, I say not whether false or true,
Have been preferred against you some time since,
Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
And which are therefore undergoing now
The due investigation. That is all.
I doubt not but your innocence will prove
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Luria. My trial?

Domizia. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee !

Puccio [*to BRACCIO*]. What is "trial," sir?
It was not for a trial—surely, no—
I furnished you those notes from time to time?
I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—
And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
What should assist a—trial, do you say?
You should have told me !

Domizia. Nay, go on, go on !
His sentence ! Do they sentence him? What is it?
The block—wheel?

Braccio. Sentence there is none as yet,

Nor shall I give my own opinion now
Of what it should be, or is like to be.
When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Luria. They are right, then, to try me?

Braccio.

I assert,

Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters, keep the mummery up!
Take all the experiences of all the world,
Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with these—'t is very well!
Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like,
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There's grace in that,—and when the fresh heart breaks,
The new brain proves a ruin, what of them?
Where is the matter of one moth the more
Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
That he's the one excepted man by fate,

And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance!
Florence exists because these pass away.
She's a contrivance to supply a type
Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse;
She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change
And pass away—there's always what upholds,
Always enough to fashion the great show.
As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
Of shapely cloud substantially the same!
A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die;—
Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
Under the sun's straight influence: that is well,
That is worth heaven should hold, and God should bless!
And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
Which draws and holds suspended all of us,
Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
Differing from each and better than they all.
And shall she dare to stake this permanence
On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,
And its temptations many: let her prove
Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Domizia. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
Though they deserve it, did she only know,
—What should she do for these?

Braccio.

What does she not?

Say, that she gives them but herself to serve !
Here 's Luria—what had profited his strength,
When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the uselessness
Of strength exerted for strength's proper sake?
But the truth is, she did create that strength,
Draw to the end the corresponding means.
The world is wide—are we the only men?
Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man the sole great wise and good !
But shall we therefore, standing by ourselves,
Insult our souls and God with the same speech?
There, swarm the ignoble thousands under him :
What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?
Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows !
She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire ! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?
Luria. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way

To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
Am I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The captain of the conquering army,—mine—
With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
To show for what their names meant when you gave,
Not what you style them now you take away?
If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory with this you menace now—
Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
My story first, your comment afterward,—
Will they take, think you, part with you or me?
If I say—I, the labourer they saw work,
Ending my work, ask pay, and find my lords
Have all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving faith,
By what you call my sentence that's to come—
Will friends advise I wait complacently?
If I meet Florence half way at their head,
What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Braccio. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
And so was saved. "See, Italy," I'll say,

"The crown of our precautions! Here's a man

"Was far advanced, just touched on the belief

"Less subtle cities had accorded long;

"But we were wiser: at the end comes this!"

And from that minute, where is Luria? Lost!

The very stones of Florence cry against

The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool

Who thus resents her first probation, flouts

As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,

He, only, walked the earth with privilege

Against suspicion, free where angels fear:

He, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,

Must turn, and stand on his defence, forsooth!

Reward? You will not be worth punishment!

Luria. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have
lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,

Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,

Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,

Reported me—how could you otherwise!

Ay?—and what dropped from you, just now, moreover?

Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill,

Your understanding sympathy approve

Such a report of me? Was this the end?

Or is even this the end? Can I stop here?

You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,

The heart to see with, past man's brain and eyes,
. . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
The unoffending one, you call your friend—
Still, lessoned by the good examples here
Of friendship, 't is but natural I ask—
Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
Than your friend's profit—in all those instances
Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—
All I remember now for the first time?

Domizia. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
Sister of Porzio and of Berto both,
So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
Must needs mistrust a stranger's—dealing them
Punishment, would deny him his reward.
And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
He would not bear, but live and fight against—
Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Luria. Hear them ! All these against one foreigner !
And all this while, where is, in the whole world,
To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio [*who has entered unseen during the preceding
dialogue*]. Here !

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
I live for Pisa ; she's not lost to-day
By many chances—much prevents from that !

Her army has been beaten, I am here,
But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance !
I rather would see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even by you ;
The example of a traitor's happy fortune
Would bring more evil in the end than good ;—
Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself !
I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
My charge,—the highest office, sword and shield !
You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
Your army, give her calumny that ground—
Nor bring one soldier : be you all we gain !
And all she 'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,
And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.
Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
A proverb and by-word in all mouths !
Go you to Pisa ! Florence is my place—
Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
To Pisa !

Domizia. Ah my Braccio, are you caught ?

Braccio. Puccio, good soldier and good citizen,
Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
Ready as fit, to serve in this event
Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—

Through me, she gives you the command and charge
She takes, through me, from him who held it late !

A painful trial, very sore, was yours :

All that could draw out, marshal in array

The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—

Slights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :

And ever you did bear and bow the head !

It had been sorry trial, to precede

Your feet, hold up the promise of reward

For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track

Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !

Trial is over, consummation shines ;

Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puccio. No, no . . . I dare not ! I am grateful, glad ;

But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged :

And he's my captain : this is not the way

We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !

The sentence is not even passed, beside !

I dare not : where's the soldier could ?

Luria.

Now, Florence—

Is it to be ? You will know all the strength

O' the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?

You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !

The savage plainly is impassible :

He keeps his calm way through insulting words,

Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which

Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense,
But if he stolidly advance, march mute
Without a mark upon his callous hide,
Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is :
It falls before him, or he dies in his course.
I kept my course through past ingratitude :
I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you : I bore and kept my course.
Now real wrong fronts me : see if I succumb !
Florence withstands me ? I will punish her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do :

After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !

Go ; you are free : join Lucca ! I suspend

All further operations till to-night.

Thank you, and for the silence most of all !

[*To BRACCIO.*] Let my complacent bland accuser go

~~Carry his self-approving head and heart~~

Safe through the army which would trample him

Dead in a moment at my word or sign !

Go, sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say—

(That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them !)

[*To DOMIZIA.*] You, lady,—you have black Italian
eyes !

I would be generous if I might : oh, yes—

(For I remember how so oft you seemed

Inclined at heart to break the barrier down

Which Florence finds God built between us both.

Alas, for generosity ! this hour

Asks retribution : bear it as you may,

I must—the Moor—the savage,—pardon you !

Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth !

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puccio. What Luria will do? Ah, 't is yours, fair sir,
Your and your subtle-witted master's part,
To tell me that ; I tell you what he can.

Jacopo. Friend, you mistake my station : I observe
The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puccio. But mankind are not pieces—there 's your
fault !

You cannot push them, and, the first move made,
Lean back and study what the next shall be,
In confidence that, when 't is fixed upon,
You find just where you left them, blacks and whites :
Men go on moving when your hand 's away.
You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
This whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build,
Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
With Luria in his ordinary mind.
But now, oppression makes the wise man mad :

How do I know he will not turn and stand
And hold his own against you, as he may?
Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa—well,—
Then, even if all happen to your wish,
Which is a chance . . .

Jacopo. Nay—'t was an oversight,
Not waiting till the proper warrant came :
You could not take what was not ours to give.
But when at night the sentence really comes,
Our city authorizes past dispute
Luria's removal and transfers the charge,
You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puccio. Accept what? muster-rolls of soldiers' names?
An army upon paper? I want men,
The hearts as well as hands—and where 's a heart
But beats with Luria, in the multitude
I come from walking through by Luria's side?
You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
Head-like, upon their trunk ; one heart feeds both,
They feel him there, live twice, and well know why.
—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
All was your act : another might have served—
There 's peradventure no such dearth of heads—
But you chose Luria : so, they grew one flesh,

And now, for nothing they can understand,
Luria removed, off is to roll the head ;
The body's mine—much I shall do with it !

Jacopo. That's at the worst.

Puccio. No—at the best, it is !

Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side.
Only we two with Luria in the camp
Are left that keep the secret? You think that?
Hear what I know : from rear to van, no heart
But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence ; they might pass—
No breast but gladlier beat when free of such !
Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jacopo. And by mistake catch up along with him
Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self despite
To still continue second in command !

Puccio. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate !
Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !
I am as you have made me, live and die
To serve your end—a mere trained fighting-hack,
With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,

For my life's rule and ordinance of God !
I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
And fight against one better than myself,
Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth—
That, you may count on !—just as hitherto
I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote,—
All because Luria superseded me—
Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place !
What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
The cordial brother's-bearing? This was clear—
I, once the captain, now was subaltern,
And so must keep complaining like a fool !
Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say !
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here 's all your pet deserves !
Of what account, then, is your laughing-stock?
One word for all : whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he turn,

Revenge himself, and Florence go to ground,—
Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
He pardon you, simply seek better friends,
Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for change
—And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief,
Dare fight against a man such fools call false,
Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights me,—
Whichever way he win, he wins for worth,
For every soldier, for all true and good !
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Husain. Saw'st thou?—For they are gone ! The
world lies bare
Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away !
Thou livest now, with men art man again !
Those Florentines were all to thee of old ;
But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each,
There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes !
Saw'st thou ?

Luria. I saw.

Husain Then, hold thy course, my king !
The years return. Let thy heart have its way :
Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,

Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?
Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends
Once at their occupation! Ere we know,
The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
Our common earth is tethered up and down,
Over and across—"here shalt thou move," they cry!

Luria. Ay, Husain?

Husain. So have they spoiled all beside!
So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
All in one tale, all singing the same song,
How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou art lost—
A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as they?
Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
Look up to it! Why, down they pull thy neck,
Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip.
Love woman! Why, a very beast thou art!
Thou must . . .

Luria. Peace, Husain!

Husain.

Ay but, spoiling all,

For all, else true things, substituting false,
That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine !
Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
And class them and allow them place and play
So far, no farther—unabashed the while !
Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
And never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
Oh, that is commendable, just and right !
“Come over,” say they, “have the honour due
“In living out thy nature ! Fight thy best :
“It is to be for Florence, not thyself !
“For thee, it were a horror and a plague ;
“For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
“How all is changed : the fire that fed on earth
“Now towers to heaven !”—

Luria.

And what sealed up so long

My Husain's mouth?

Husain.

Oh friend, oh lord—for me,

What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
Boils up, thou heart of me ! Now, live again,
Again love as thou likest, hate as free !

Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!

Luria. So clear what Florence must expect of me?

Husain. Both armies against Florence! Take revenge!
Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
And, after live, in memory, year by year—
And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure have!
Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
And blends with life, to show it better by,
—How think'st thou?—I have turned that light on them!
They called our thirst of war a transient thing;
“The battle-element must pass away
“From life,” they said, “and leave a tranquil world.”
—Master, I took their light and turned it full
On that dull turgid vein they said would burst
And pass away; and as I looked on life,
Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same.
Why, 't was all fighting, all their nobler life!
All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
And every joy obtained—a victory!
Be not their dupe!

—Their dupe? That hour is past!

Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm :
All is determined. Silence for me now !

[HUSAIN goes.]

Luria. Have I heard all ?

Domizia [*advancing from the background*]. No,
Luria, I remain !

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
As failing of sustainment from thyself,
—Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
Shalt thou abolish Florence ! I proclaim
The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share !
Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen : second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops ;
So the few famous men of old combined,

And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew :
Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered many grew in pride
And grudged the station of the elected ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude—
Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence : who can tell
The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, live?
My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
My slender life proves what has passed away.
I lived when they departed ; lived to cling
To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldst rise
And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.
I have done nothing ; all was thy strong bole.
But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
Which after holds an aery in its arms,
And 't was my care that nought should warp thy spire
From rising to the height ; the roof is reached
O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky !
Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'T is man's cause !

Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread :
Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more—
And while the ignoble past is justified,
Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,
The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require
As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached.
Man calls thee, God requites thee ! All is said,
The mission of my House fulfilled at last :
And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
Reserves speech—it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.]

Luria. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then !
Doing the various work of all his friends,
And answering every purpose save his own.
No doubt, 't is well for them to wish ; but him—
After the exploit what were left? Perchance
A little pride upon the swarthy brow
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,—
Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit :
(But after !—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low)

—(Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage!)—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor!
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so!
Whence grew this? What withdrew her faith from me?
Some cause! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again!
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech:
But what could it have been in word or deed
Thus injured me? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps.
My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they?
Why risk the danger? See, what I could do!
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines? The notable revenge
I meditated! To stay passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose!
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
And if my chieftains acquiesce. what then?

I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset? Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm? Not they!
How could they interpose with those old fools
I' the council? Suffer for those old fools' sake—
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world, where we can see!
The sun that guides is closer to us! There—
There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky.
Why, there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest: and yet we Florentines
With souls intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much—
Therefore we wronged him! Does he turn in ire
To burn the earth that cannot understand?

Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
His task once ended? Night wipes blame away.
Another morning from my East shall spring
And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
Praise the new Luria and forget the old!

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*

Strange! This is all I brought from my own land
To help me: Europe would supply the rest,
All needs beside, all other helps save one!
I thought of adverse fortune, battle lost,
The natural upbraiding of the loser,
And then this quiet remedy to seek
At end of the disastrous day. [He drinks.

'T is sought!

This was my happy triumph-morning: Florence
Is saved: I drink this, and ere night,—die! Strange!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA *and* PUCCIO.

Luria. I thought to do this, not to talk this: well,
Such were my projects for the city's good,
To help her in attack or by defence.
Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change;
But not a little we provide against
—If you see clear on every point.

Puccio.

Most clear.

Luria. Then all is said—not much, if you count words,
Yet to an understanding ear enough;
And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
My elder in command, or threw a doubt
Upon the very skill, it comforts me
To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
Which never failed me: yet, because it seemed
A stranger's eye might haply note defect

That skill, through use and custom, overlooks—
I have gone into the old cares once more,
As if I had to come and save again
Florence—that May—that morning! 'T is night now.
Well—I broke off with? . . .

Puccio. Of the past campaign
You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
For future use.

Luria. True, so . . . but, time—no time!
As well end here: remember this, and me!
Farewell now!

Puccio. Dare I speak?

Luria. South o' the river—
How is the second stream called . . . no,—the third?

Puccio. Pesa.

Luria. And a stone's cast from the fording-place,
To the east,—the little mount's name?

Puccio. Lupo.

Luria. Ay !

Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe !
With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not !

Puccio. Fear not me !

Luria. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,

Who forced a pass by Staggia on the hills,
And kept the Sienese at check !

Puccio.

One word—

Sir, I must speak ! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding, howsoe'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now,
Even will affect the other course you choose—
Poor as it may be, perils even that !
Refuge you seek at Pisa : yet these plans
All militate for Florence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen
O' the country,—which her rivals rose against
When you began it,—which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price !
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
With this made perfect and on record ?

Luria.

I—

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say ?

Puccio. Where are you going, then ? You must decide
On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines,
Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a past, as it had never been !
Where are you going ?

Luria. Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence.

Puccio. Ay,—
But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
For see—though nothing 's surely known as yet,
Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there 's nothing can arrest the step
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not !
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity?
You may do harm to her—why then, you will !
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on?

Luria. One sure friend.

Puccio. Potent?

Luria. All-potent.

Puccio. And he is apprised?

Luria. He waits me.

Puccio. So!—Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To this, the State's gift, now add yours beside—

That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence good.
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then?

Luria. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know and praise.

Puccio. Though so, men say, “mark what we gain
by change

“—A Puccio for a Luria!”

Luria.

Even so.

Puccio. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my captain and my lord!
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest for ever!
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops, and there is peace at once!
I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields!
God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
On orders, warrants, patents, and the like,
As if there were no glowing eye i' the world

To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats !
For, see—my doubt, where is it?—fear? 't is flown !
And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child. Why, half-a-dozen words
Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
Her error, my past folly—and all 's right,
And you are Luria, our great chief again !
Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
To exile or to death I follow you.

Luria. Thanks, Puccio ! Let me use the privilege
You grant me : if I still command you,—stay !
Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
And not successor : let me, as of old,
Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—
Still triumph, one for both. There ! Leave me now !
You cannot disobey my first command?
Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
And what you promised to concert with him !
Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell !
You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO goes.]

So, there 's one Florentine returns again !
Out of the genial morning-company
One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jacopo. I wait for your command, sir.

Luria. What, so soon?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.
So, I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me, were a town to take
. . . That is, of old. I am departing hence
Under these imputations; that is nought—
I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger: all the more behoves
That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall: the roots
O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
No root of mine will throb, you understand.
But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now, and punished so—
The Traversari: you know more than I
How stigmatized they are and lost in shame.
Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,

Both served them and succeeded, in due time ;
He knows the way, holds proper documents,
And has the power to lay the simple truth
Before an active spirit, as I count yours :
And also there 's Tiburzio, my new friend,
Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the great chivalric soul we know.
I put it to your tact, sir—were 't not well,
—A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
If you who witness, and have borne a share
Involuntarily in my mischance,
Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
To indicate—that is, investigate
The right or wrong of what mischance befell
Those famous citizens, your countrymen ?
Nay, you shall promise nothing : but reflect,
And if your sense of justice prompt you—good !

Jacopo. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
I used to hold by the instructed brain,
And move with Braccio as my master-wind ;
The heart leads surelier : I must move with you—
As greatest now, who ever were the best.

So, let the last and humblest of your servants
Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
And tender homage by obeying you !

[JACOPO goes.]

Luria. Another ! Luria goes not poorly forth.
If we could wait ! The only fault 's with time ;
(All men become good creatures : but so slow !)

Enter DOMIZIA.

Luria. Ah, you once more ?

Domizia. Domizia, whom you
knew,

Performed her task, and died with it. 'T is I,
Another woman, you have never known. *
Let the past sleep now !

Luria. I have done with it.

Domizia. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With nought beyond to live for, — is that reached ?
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object ; there 's another world.
See ! I have told the purpose of my life ;
'T is gained : you are decided, well or ill —

You march on Florence, or submit to her—
My work is done with you, your brow declares.
But—leave you? More of you seems yet to reach :
I stay for what I just begin to see.

Luria. So that you turn not to the past !

Domizia.

You trace

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
Which sought its end and disregarded yours ?

Luria. Speak not against your nature : best, each keep
His own—you, yours—most, now that I keep mine,
—At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
We would confound : the lesser has its use,
Which, when it apes the greater, is forgone.

I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;

But, punished properly, can end, a Moor.

Beside, there's something makes me understand
Your nature : I have seen it.

Domizia.

Aught like mine ?

Luria. In my own East . . . if you would stoop and
help

My barbarous illustration ! It sounds ill ;
Yet there's no wrong at bottom : rather, praise.

Domizia. Well ?

Luria.

We have creatures there, which if
you saw

The first time, you would doubtless marvel at
For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
And though it were a lively moment's shock
When you first found the purpose of forked tongues
That seem innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made know such grace requires such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best—
So, take them, good with ill, contentedly,
The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
(I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines :
Yet . . .

Domizia. I am here to listen.

Luria. My own East !
How nearer God we were ! He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours :
We feel him, nor by painful reason know !
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there ; now it is, as it was then ;
All changes at his instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon his world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty ? To recast

The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there.
And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
While Northern thought is slow and durable,
Surely a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power
And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
Should have remained, turned knowledge to account,
Giving thought's character and permanence
To the too transitory feeling there—
Writing God's message plain in mortal words.
Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed least,
Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making mine, —
And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me! There, how all had understood,
Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
Fresh instinct to translate them into law!
Me, who . . .

Domizia. Who here the greater task achieve,
More needful even: who have brought fresh stuff
For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know

O' the instant, where had been our need of it?
—Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All, once revealed but taught us so long since
That, having mere tradition of the fact,—
Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
The early traits all dropped away,—we said
On sight of faith like yours, “So looks not faith
“We understand, described and praised before.”
But still, the feat was dared; and though at first
It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
Our slow thought does its work, and all's re-known.
Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed
I see not, but no animal revenge,
No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
Traced for me by convention and mistake,
Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
To his own soul, he whom I trust with mine!

Luria. In time!

Domizia. How, Luria?

Luria. It is midnight now,

And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Domizia. I hear no step.

Luria. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Husain. The man returned from Florence!

Luria. As I knew.

Husain. He seeks thee.

Luria. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Husain. A movement of the Lucchese troops
Southward—

Luria. Toward Florence? Have out instantly . .
Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth.
In—quick—'t is nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Tiburzio?—not at Pisa?

Tiburzio. I return
From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
By such procedure I have served her best.
A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this,
That your sole fate concerns a nation more
Than much apparent welfare; that to prove

Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
Imports us far beyond to-day's event,
A battle's loss or gain : man's mass remains,—
Keep but God's model safe, new men will rise
To take its mould, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's glory. True—
I might go try my fortune as you urged,
And, joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done ;
But where leave Luria for our sons to see?
No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Her full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity, as none else could : I spoke,
And out it shone !

Luria. Ah—until Braccio spoke !

Braccio. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
His lapse to error, his return to knowledge :
Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,
I whom shame rests with ! Yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon now I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end !
'T is morn approaches ! Still you answer not?
Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away ;
Our faces, which phantasmal grew and false,
Are all that felt it : they change round you, turn

Truly themselves now in its vanishing.

Speak, Luria! Here begins your true career:

Look up, advance! All now is possible,

Fact's grandeur, no false dreaming! Dare and do!

And every prophecy shall be fulfilled

Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)

—That you would punish Florence!

Husain [*pointing to LURIA's dead body*]. That is done.

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Volume I. was published on January 1, 1885, and a volume has been issued every three months since that date.

A further Volume will be published on January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1 of each year until the completion of the work.

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